

FACT SHEET

The National Weather Service and Alaska's Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management will conduct a tsunami warning communications test in cooperation with local emergency management offices and the Alaska Broadcasters Association.

The test will be conducted on March 30 at 9:45 a.m. Alaska Standard Time.

People throughout the state who are listening to radio or television broadcasts will hear the test if the system is working properly.

Live tsunami warning codes will be used during this test, rather than the usual monthly test code. Using live warning codes means that this test will be different than the routine monthly tests Alaskans are used to. The difference is that some communications systems will exhibit a "Tsunami Warning" rather than a "Test."

Automated systems, such as for cable TV, are programmed to scroll or post a canned message based upon the code received. In this case, the message television viewers see will say, "THE NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE HAS ISSUED A TSUNAMI WARNING FOR ALL OF ALASKA..." The audio message accompanying the crawler will explain it is a test, but if the volume is turned down or otherwise not able to be heard, viewers may not realize it is a test at first.

This test is being conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of Alaska's tsunami warning system. There is no other way to fully test the system than to use live warning codes.

While television viewers will see something out of the ordinary, radio listeners should hear the familiar alerting tone followed by an audio message describing the test, similar to the routine monthly tests of the EAS.

Governor Murkowski has proclaimed the week of March 27 – April 2, 2005 as Tsunami Awareness Week. The week coincides with the anniversary of the Great Alaskan Earthquake which occurred 41 years ago on Good Friday. Tsunamis triggered by that earthquake caused the deaths of 123 people in Alaska, Oregon, and California.

Officials will evaluate the success of the test and correct any problems that are uncovered. They ask that if you live in a coastal area, please monitor your usual news sources during this scheduled test and report the outcome via a website. The web address will be given in the test message. Most importantly, people living or working in coastal areas that DO NOT receive the test through commercial radio or weather radio should contact their local NWS office and inform them.

If there is seismic activity to the extent that it could lead to confusion or uncertainty on the day that the test is scheduled, the test will be cancelled.